

August 31, 2009

Dan Ruben
Executive Director, Equal Justice America
Building II, Suite 204
13540 East Boundary Road
Midlothian, VA 23112

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I spent my summer as an intern at Cabrini Green Legal Aid in Chicago. Most of my work was with the family law program, working on a wide range of cases, including custody, guardianship, child support, divorce, and other domestic relations issues.

CGLA itself was a wonderful place to work, both because of the organization itself and the clients we serve. CGLA started in the notorious Cabrini Green neighborhood, with the goal of providing legal services to individuals with little access to justice. Through expansion beyond its single founding attorney, its focus on the client has remained, and is reflected in its vision: "for clients to leave us stronger than they came."

From my first day, I found myself immersed in emotional and high impact cases, where my work had real effects in my clients' lives. One of my clients came to us for help with a divorce. It seems like a simple legal issue, but she had been the victim of domestic violence throughout her marriage. Helping her through the process gave her the strength to stand up in court and achieve closure, helping her to begin to heal and move forward with her life. Another client came to us with a custody issue; he wanted to have legal custody of his son, who was already living with him. One of the memorable moments of my summer was when we were prepping him for his custody hearing. We told him to bring whatever we could show at trial to prove his son was doing well, and he arrived with a bag bulging with letters from teachers, academic awards, sports team photos, and an essay his son had written about family. I knew, during that case, that we were going to help make their lives a little bit easier, by taking away the obstacles they had faced when the father didn't have legal custody.

Over the summer, we also did clemency intake interviews. This was a weeklong process where we interviewed potential clients, eligible to petition the governor for executive clemency for past criminal offenses, to assist them with the process. All our candidates had no arrests for the past ten years, and as we interviewed them, we began to learn how each one of these individuals had turned their lives around. Their stories were moving, and we took more cases than we intended.

I was continually amazed at how much seemingly simple work was appreciated by many of our clients. A number came to us with relatively simple legal issues, but faced language

barriers or socioeconomic barriers that prevented them from finding out where to go or what to file. Helping these clients resolve their legal issues made me feel like my law degree was really going to help others in my community. My own work made justice accessible and available to individuals to whom it was previously out of reach.

I also learned about the true need for legal services. We interviewed many more potential clients than we could accept, and many more people called than we could interview. The value of the help provided by legal services organizations, and the scarcity of that help compared to the vast need, is striking, and was readily apparent throughout my work. I am sure this summer will continue to be a source of inspiration for me to

Thank you for making this summer possible. Equal Justice America makes it possible for law students to learn the importance of public interest law, and for organizations like CGLA to reach even more clients.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kathleen M. Sullivan". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Kathleen M. Sullivan
Loyola University Chicago School of Law
J.D. 2011